News from the Wyoming Department of Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Dangers of Secondhand Smoke Described

The director of the Wyoming Department of Health is welcoming the findings of a national report released today by the U.S. Surgeon General on health effects of secondhand smoke.

"Secondhand smoke is not just something that bugs you; it's something that hurts you," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. "This report confirms there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke."

Highlights from the *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke* report include:

- *Secondhand smoke exposure causes disease and premature death in children and adults who do not smoke.
- *Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma.
- *Smoking by parents causes respiratory symptoms and slows lung growth in their children.
- *Exposure of adults to secondhand smoke causes a 25-30 percent increased risk of coronary heart disease and lung cancer.
- *Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air and ventilating buildings are not fully effective.

The Wyoming Department of Health, through its Substance Abuse Division, is actively involved in educating people in Wyoming about tobacco use.

"We have made great progress in this state, but too many residents are still exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes and workplaces," Sherard said. In Wyoming, about 82 percent of workplaces are reported to be smokefree and at least 68 percent of restaurants are smokefree.

"If you smoke and want to quit because you are concerned about yourself or about your family's exposure to secondhand smoke, there is help available," Sherard said.

The Wyoming Department of Health's Quit Tobacco Program offers support and resources to those who want to quit smoking. The number to call is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

####